

Syracuse's Howie Hawkins closer to securing Green Party presidential nod after NY win

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FILE - Howie Hawkins participates in a 2018 gubernatorial debate in Albany. Hawkins, a Syracuse resident, won the Green Party presidential primary in New York on Saturday.

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Howie Hawkins admits he was nervous before the Green Party presidential primary in New York on Saturday.

The result was what he wanted.

Hawkins, a retired UPS employee and Teamsters member from Syracuse, received 17 of 21 delegates to win the primary. The primary election was conducted by mail-in ballot, according to Hawkins' campaign.

The victory puts Hawkins closer to securing the Green Party presidential nomination. He has received 128.5 delegates — 64% of the total needed (201) to win the nomination during the first round of balloting at the convention.

The Greens' nominating convention will be held online on July 11.

"I'm in a good position," Hawkins said in a phone interview Saturday. "I'm pretty confident."

Interest in his campaign grew after U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Democratic presidential candidate, dropped out of the race and endorsed former Vice President Joe Biden. With former Sanders supporters backing his campaign, Hawkins said they are gaining momentum.

As Hawkins aims to secure more support to win the Green Party presidential nomination, he's also hoping to appear on the general election ballots in every state and the District of Columbia. So far, he and his running mate, Angela Walker, are on the ballot in nearly half the states.

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting ballot access, he acknowledged it has been difficult to get on the ballot in some states. They are urging states to allow them to appear on the ballot. Vermont accepted their request. Illinois denied it, but the Greens challenged the decision and won.

The shutdown caused by the public health crisis led to a shift in how Hawkins interacts with voters. Instead of holding in-person events and traveling across the country, he's been using Skype, Streamyard and Zoom to share his message.

"I'm probably talking to more people than I would've setting up meetings in different towns and cities and talking to people face to face," he said. "In a way, it's worked out good for us given that we have to reach voters one on one."

While the campaign tactics may be different, the platform isn't. Hawkins is proposing a Green New Deal that consists of an economic bill of rights and a green economy reconstruction program. The measures would include a basic income guarantee, universal prekindergarten and child care, free public college, an interstate high-speed rail system and an interstate renewable electricity system.

He also supports establishing an interstate high-speed internet system, zero-waste recycling and green manufacturing.

Hawkins argues that there's a good opportunity for these policies to resonate with voters because of the economic decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The depression that we're plunging into is unlike any other developed country," he said. "Businesses are going out of business. Consumers are not spending because what money they still have they are saving for essentials. Investors are not going to want to make new investments in this risky environment."

The presidential bid is Hawkins' latest campaign for elective office. A co-founder of the Green Party, he has been a candidate for Congress and U.S. Senate. He was the New York Green Party's gubernatorial nominee in 2010, 2014 and 2018. In between, he ran for Syracuse mayor, a Syracuse Common Council seat and city auditor.

asked to run for presidentEight years ago, he was . He declined at the time since he was still working at UPS and wouldn't have the time needed to campaign.

Now that he's retired, he's attempting to mount a serious bid for the presidency.

"With (President Donald Trump) incompetent and Biden largely invisible, we have an opportunity here," he said.

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